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A Brief Account, and seasonable Improvement of the late EARTHQUAKE in *Northampton-shire*, *Jan.* 4. 167⅝.

In a Letter to a Friend in *London*.

Licensed *Jan.* 27. 167⅝ *Roger L'estrange.*

SIR,

HAd I not long since been assured that the Designs of all your Enquiries are sober, and pious, becoming a Christian, your Importunity to be satisfied in the circumstances of the late Concussion, had knockt at my Door in vain. For I am seldom at so desperate a loss how to entertain my self, or bestow my subcessive Hours, that I should be necessitated to fill up my Thoughts with, or place out my leasure Minutes upon the Gratifying *the Itch of Curiosity*; A Salt Humour which while we strive to *please by Scratching*, we do but the more *irritate it's Pruriency*, which in time will issue out in *the Scab of Impertinency*.

I have ever reckoned it amongst the Symptomes of a degnerate Age, that Men fill up their converses much like the *Athenians*, who *spent their time in nothing else but either to tell, or hear some* new thing. Their *Parturient Tongues* either groaning to be delivered of, or their *Itching Ears* longing to be tickled with *Novelties*, and *Prodiges*: for hence is it, that the most *Tremendous Providences* of God evaporate into *Idle Chat*; And serve to furnish out the triflings of a *Coffee-house*, but rarely *sink down into the Heart*, to beget a Holy Admiration of the Divine Majesty, *which removeth the Mountains, and they know it not*; *which overturneth them in his Anger*; *which shaketh the Earth out of her place, and the Pillars thereof Tremble.* Act. 17. 21. Job 9. 5. 6.

But though you seem in great hast to receive information in the particulars of this *Phænomenon*, that you will neither allow me room of *Time or Paper* to turn my Pen in, and I am obliged to *make Brick without Straw*; Yet must I beg your pardon if I demur a little, *whether it were an Earth-*

quake or no? for you must confess it hugely Preposterous to enquire, *De Modo rei, ubi nondum constat de re:* To be solicitous and elaborate about *Accidents* and *Circumstances*, before we are arrived at a plerophery of *the thing it self*.

And all the Reason in the World will oblige us to suspend a while this Narrative, since I can assure you, some Learned Persons are confident it was no Earthquake, caused by Subterraneous Fires, or Exhalations, but *A Concussion of the Air, by a Cavalcade of Spirits Trooping it through the Lower Region.* But whither these Spirits were *Bound*; or where was the Place of their *Rendezvous*, or upon what *Errand* they were *Dispatcht*, or whether they were *Celestial Courtiers*, or of the *Black Guard of Pluto*, they are not pleased to inform us.

I lookt upon't as *a Blot in the Escutcheon of the old Philosophy*, that it assigns a distinct *Intelligence* to every of the *Orbes*, where they are placed (like Children at the Spinning-Wheel,) to whirle about the Spheres, because they could not else conceive a Reason of their perpetual Motions: And as 'twas a violation of the Sacred Laws of *Comedy* to introduce Θεὸν ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, *an Angel from Heaven* to extricate *the poor Poet*, when he had run his wits into confusion with his own Plots; so it looks but oddly to have recourse to *Spirits* and *Dæmons*, when the case admits of *fair Salvo's*, and may spare these *extraordinary contrivances*.

But the Naked matter of Fact is the best confutation of this ingenious Fancy, and I shall now as briefly, as impartially, addresse my self to the Relation of it.

On Tuesday the 4th of this instant *January*, about 8 of the Clock at Night, being alone in a room remote from all destracting Noise, and disturbing Company (circumstances advantagious for Observation) I was suddenly startled from some fixedness of thoughts, by a Loud, Roaring, Hollow, Terrible Noise. And I was the more surprized with it, and concerned to attend unto it, because I had observed that all that preceding Day, and Evening there was not the least Whisper, or Breath of Wind stirring: I presently fancied that a Chimney in the next Rooom had taken Fire, the Roaring noise of which this did exactly imitate, as formerly being in the same place I had met with a terrifying experiment; and indeed upon after consultation with others I found many concurring in the same apprehensions; but this conjecture as it suddenly entred, so it as suddenly vanished, when I heard the *Window to shake and tremble*, as if the Decrepit Glass would immediately have dropt down, *the Floor of the Chamber over my Head to Crack* once and again, and *the House it self seem to Totter*; I wondred that such a gust of Wind should assault the House, but upon strict observation I could not discern or Tree or Bush to move; Thus being much amazed (for I will not conceal my secret fears,) my Heart shook as much as the House, and I set my self with what composedness I could command, to expect the issue, and in half a quarter of an hour or less,

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the Noiſe, and together with it the Shaking, ceaſed: and this in ſhort is the total of my perſonal Obſervation.

Should I tell you what Informations I have received from other perſons, and Places, that ſome did ſenſibly feel the Chaires wherein they ſat to ſhake under them; that others ſtanding upon their feet were apparently ſeen to ſtagger; that one had his Book almoſt ſhaken out of his Hands; with the terrour that ſeized them; and to give you all this, and much more ſolemnly atteſted under the Hands of Perſons of unqueſtionable Credit, and of Cautelous Judgments, not to be impoſed upon by *Panick Fears*, I conceive perfectly ſuperfluous: for though ſome may hæſitate at *the Cauſe*, yet none amongſt us do queſtion *the Truth of the Thing*; and for you at this diſtance, as I cannot create you a Faith, nor force you to a belief of my Teſtimony, ſo am I not much Ambitious of it.

They who are of ſuch *wary Heads*, that they will ſuſpect what Hundreds will readily avouch, do but teach others to ſuſpect their moſt confident Aſſertions, and as St. *Auſtin* in another caſe, *He that believes not the Miracles of Chriſt, is himſelf the greateſt Miracle*; ſo will I take the freedom to ſay, He that believes not *a Fact*, in which all Men uniformly, and unanimouſly concur, deſerves never to be believed: And let ſuch a one wear the ſame Feather which the conceited *Hobbes* carries in his Cap; *Aut ego ſolus inſanio, aut omnes inſaniunt*; *Either the* Leviathan *alone was out of his wits, or elſe all the World.* And which of the Two is moſt probable is of no difficult Determination.

There are nevertheleſs Three or Four particulars, which if you deſpiſe as below your notice, yet I judged them worthy of mine.

1. That there had been all the Day before this terrible Concuſſion ſuch a dead Calm, and the Air in ſuch a poſture of ſtagnation, that I well remember I took ſo far notice of it as to ſay not above two Hours before, That in the *Ariſtotelian Philoſophy*, ſuch a μαλακια was ever reputed one of the ſpecial *Prognoſticks of an Earthquake*.

2. That during this dreadful noiſe, neither the Trees, nor Plants betrayed any Agitation or Motion in the Air: which confirms their Notion, who have ſtaled Earthquakes, *Subterranean Thunders*; and 'tis alſo a great prejudice to their Opinion, who would obtrude upon us the conceit of *Angels, or Spirits riding Poſt through the Air.* For had that been the cauſe of this Noiſe, and Shaking, then, 1. The Motion would have *born all one way*, as coming from, and tending to a determinate Point; whereas here, no Motion was diſcernable but that of *Trepidation.* And 2. this violent Motion would have had the ſame effects with Storms, and Tempeſts, cauſed the ſame diſturbance in the Air, toſſed the tops of Trees; for ſeeing that *all Noiſe* ariſes from the *Colliſion of Bodies*, to which there is required a *Motion* proportionable to *the Noiſe.* Had theſe ſuppoſed Spirits moved at ſuch a rate, as to beget *that Noiſe*, they muſt do it *by Motion*, which would have diſcovered it ſelf in the common and ordinary effects of Motion, un-

leſs we will again fly to ſupernatural Reaſons and Miracles. Now that there was no ſuch Commotion in the Air, is aſſerted by thoſe who were then abroad in the Fields, who were ſenſible of no ſuch diſturbance, and which indeed created, or augmented their wonderment.

3. I obſerve that this Earth-quake (for ſuch I will now take the liberty to call it) was not *univerſal*, in reſpect either of the Towns, or Countries, where it came, but *Topical*; As being felt in *one part of ſome Towns*, and not in another; and again, obſerved in *ſome whole Towns*, yet not at all in ſome Neighbouring Villages; following perhaps the inviting track of the Nitrous, and ſulphureous Veins, and guided by the attractive Steams of the inflammable materials. It was alſo *Deſultory*; The next Village to us but at half a miles diſtance knowing nothing of it, and yet ſome places more remote towards the ſame point ſharing in the Terror of it. And laſtly it was *Unequal*, both as to the Noiſe, and Trembling: and yet herein might poſſibly be a miſtake; for it might be from the weakneſs of their Houſes, the Multitude, and largeneſs of Windows, that the ſhaking was apprehended more terrible than in other places.

4. Very few miſſed the notice of this particular; That juſt before the Concuſſion, the Air was very obſcure, and yet immediately after it cleared up and became very ſerene; And ſome do impute the former obſcurity to thoſe *fuliginous Reeks* which from the Bowels of the Earth might creep forth; and the *after clearneſs* to the violence of the diſcharged Subterraneous Thunder: But I muſt entreat you, Sir, for your ſatisfaction to go to the Philoſophers.

For that which will moſt profitably fill up the Remainder of my time, and ſheer, muſt be an enquiry of another Nature, *viz.* *What good uſe, and practical improvement may be made of this great work of God?* And my Pen will more chearfully travel in that Service: 1. Becauſe I perceive ſome too apt to *abuſe theſe Appearances*. For there are *thoſe* (by what *Patent* I know not) that would *Monopolize* all the Prodigious Works of God to *their own uſe and behoof*; As if the Almighty was bound to abett ſome ſingle Party, or to eſpouſe their little Intereſts; when as indeed to the impartial Conſiderer his *Works* ſpeak the ſame language with his *Word*, which indifferently preaches to us all: *Now therefore thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, conſider your ways.* And the Echo which all our hearts ſhould make to this voice of God, is this, *Let us ſearch and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.* There are *thoſe alſo*, who ſwelling with *Atheiſtical Scorn*, can throw up their Noſes at theſe Providences of God, and with one puff of contemptuous Arrogancy blow away all conſiderations of them, ſaying in their Hearts; *Who is the Lord that we ſhould Tremble before him?* And 2. the rather, becauſe the rare and unuſual Works of God have ever been

Hag. 1. 5.

Lam. 3. 40.

been adjudged by the most Sober, and Temperate of Christians to be Warnings and Awakenings to any people: Thus *Eusebius* of the Prodigies in *Jerusalem*, tells us they were ἐναργῆ, καὶ προσημαίνοντα μέλλουσαν ἐφεμίαν τοῖς τότε —— And τὰ τῆς θείας κηρύγματα, *The evident Prognosticks of Future Judgments, and the very Sermons of God himself.* And surely when *the great God* shall condescend to preach to a People by his *Works* who have so notably despised his *Word*, it will become High and Low, the Best and the Worst of the Sons of Men, to be his *Attentive Auditors.*

Eccles. Hist. Lib. 3. c. 8.

(1.) First then we may certainly learn a lesson of Praise to God, that we were *not all Buried in the Ruines of our own Habitations.* He that *shook our Houses*, could as easily have *overturned our Houses*; but he shewed both his *Greatness* that he *could* do it, and yet his *Goodness* that he *would not* do it.

The unquestionable Records of History do abound with Instances of this Nature: *Josephus* informs us, that in the 7th year of *Herod* above *ten thousand persons were overwhelmed by Earthquake in the Ruines of their Houses:* but I shall not attempt to reconcile himself to himself, when (speaking of the same dreadful providence) he tells us, that *there chanced a great Earthquake which slew thirty thousand People.*

Antiqu. Lib. 15. *De Bell.* Jud. l. 2. c. 14.

Pliny in his Second Book of *Nat. Hist.* reports, *That in the Reign of* Tib. Cæsar, *there happened the greatest Earthquake that ever was known in the Memory of Man, whereby Twelve Cities in* Asia *were destroyed in one Night:* But *Nicephorus* reckons Fourteen, and gives us their Names, *Ephesus, Magnesia, Sardis, Mosthene, Hiero-cæsarea, Philadelphia, Tmolis, Timus, Myrina, Cyme, Apollonia, Hyreana, Dia, Cybara.* And I think it was the most remarkable Charity that *cruel Emperor* was ever guilty of, that he contributed to their Re-edifying. *Ne Provincias ullâ Liberalitate sublevavit, exceptâ Asiâ, dirjectis terræ Motu Civitatibus:* He never extended his bounty to any of the Provinces, excepting only *Asia*, when so many Cities were destroyed by an Earthquake. But he that had *so few good works* to boast of, might well be allowed to be proud of that *one*, and therefore to eternize his Magnificence, he coined Money with this *Memorial Inscription: Civitatibus Asiæ Restitutis*: In memory of the Rebuilding the Asiatick Cities.

c. 49.

Sueto. in vit. *Tib.*

Thus *An. Mun.* 3599. *Deus* Helicen, & Muram, Achaiæ *urbes undis, terræque hiatibus absorpsit*: God (saith my Author) swallowed up *Helice* and *Mura*, two Cities of *Achaia*, with a Deluge, and Earthquake. And *An. Chr.* 1424. *in* Catalonia *twenty one Cities were utterly destroyed, and* Tertona *devoured by Earthquake.* And in *Burgundy*, a Mountain remo-

Johan. de Mey. Sacr. Phys. Par. 2. *cap.* 3.

removing out of its place, destroyed many thousands of the poor Husbandmen.

Psal 147. 17. The Psalmist asks this Question, *Who can stand before his Cold?* And certainly should the *Almighty* let loose upon us his *Winter's Cold*, or graduate the *Summer's Heat*, should he take his Restraint from the Seas, which he holds *in the Hollow of his Hand*; or should he pluck off his *double Bridle* with which he curbs the raging Storms, and foaming Tempests; should he enlarge his commission to *Thunder, Lightning, Earthquakes*, we must in one moment perish. But *the Lord reigneth*, and therefore *let* *Psal.* 97. 1. *the Earth rejoice, let the Multitude of the Isles be glad thereof.* And let us amongst the rest acknowledg and rejoice that *the Lord reigneth*: for, as all *Naturalists* teach us, no places are so obnoxious to Earthquakes as Islands; *because the Earth being there most Cavernous and Porous*, admits *Aristot. 2. Meteor.* the Humours, of which are begotten Vapors, which striving to deliver themselves from Prison, and Repelled by the Waves of the Sea, being rarified by violent motion, and requiring more room, force themselves a passage, with most dreadful effects: No People in the World are so obliged to thankfulness as Islanders, being daily preserved from *Deluges and Earthquakes* to which we are so lyable.

(2.) Let the sleepy World Awake, and the secure Sinner rowze up his sluggish Soul to Repentance at these Lesser Concussions, lest God destroy them by Greater. Men are certainly in *a deep, and dead sleep* when Earthquakes will not Alarm their Consciences: If we dispise him that thus Speaks to us *from the Earth*, the next time we may hear of him *from Heaven*. When our Heads, *begin to ake*, who can secure us that it shall not end in a Fever, which may put *a period to our Lives*? And when the Earth *begins to Tremble*, who knows whether it be not *an Accession* towards that last, and great *Ague fit* of the Creation, wherein the Heavens and the Earth, and all the Elements shall be blended in an Eternal Chaos? for we are warned from the unerring records of Holy Writ, that *There shall* *Luk.* 21. 11. *be great Earthquakes*, before the great and notable Day of the Lord come: which prophesy though it received a *lesser accomplishment* in the destruction of *Jerusalem*, yet most learned Men are agreed, that these shall be the *prodromous tokens* of the Dissolution of the World.

Heathen Rome it self had such dreadful apprehensions of Earthquakes, that upon these occasions, they appointed *solemn days of Sacrifice to their* Sueton. *in vitâ* Claudii. *Gods*: Nay the *Historian* observes it of *Claudius Cæsar*; that he gave order, *ut quoties terra in urbe movisset, feriæ, advocatâ concione, Prætor indiceret*: That as often as there was an Earthquake in the City, the Prætor should proclaim a Holy Day. And *A. Gellius* observes that because Philosophers could not agree about the Natural causes, that therefore when-

whenever they decreed a ſolemn Day upon this Account, they never named the particular Deity to whom it was dedicated, (as otherwiſe the cuſtom was) leſt they ſhould miſtake the God that cauſed it; And that if the day were polluted, they expiated it by Sacrifice, *Si Deo, ſi Deæ*, &c. to that *Numen* at all adventures, whether it were *God or Goddeſs*. Agreeable to the practice of the *Athenians*, who in the time of a raging Peſtilence, that they might be ſure to hit upon the right Deity, erected an Altar, and offered ſacrifice thereon, τῷ προσήκοντι θεῷ, *to that God who was fit for the purpoſe*: moſt probably the ſame which St. *Paul* found at *Athens* with this inſcription, Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ, *To the unknown God.* *Acts* 17.

And as the *Roman Decemviri* in theſe exigencies were enjoyned to conſult the *Sibylline Oracles*, ſo let us who have a *more ſure word of Propheſy*, and to *whom there is but one, the Living, and the true God*, conſult the Holy Scriptures for our duty, which direct us to the Sacrifices of Prayer, Repentance, a Broken and Contrite Heart, and above all to our *Advocate with the Father*, to turn away his deſerved Wrath. And let us all make the ſame uſe of this, which the *Jayler* made of his Earthquake and cry out, *Sir's! what muſt we do to be Saved?* and take the anſwer with thankfulneſs: *Believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and you ſhall be Saved.* *Act.* 16. 30, 31.

(3.) Let us ſearch out thoſe particular Sins for which God may have a Controverſy with us, Neglect, and Contempt, or at beſt an inconſiderable, and diſproportionable improvement of the Goſpel, Pride, fulneſs of Bread, Security, Worldlineſs, indifferency of Spirit in Religion. Chriſt charges *Sardis*, that ſhe had *a Name to Live, and yet was Dead.* And Hiſtory informs us that God reckoned with *Aſia* by Earthquakes about the 12 of *Nero An. Chr.* 68. Nothing leſs than a ſerious through-reformation of theſe abominations will divert the diſpleaſure of God. What the Natural Effects of Earthquakes have been, *Naturaliſts* are very liberal in their informations: How they have rent away ſome parts and limbs of a Country from the main body; ſo was *Sicily* torn off from *Italy*; ſo was *Cyprus* forced from the continent of *Syria*; *Euboea*, from the main Land of *Bœotia*; and as ſome think, by an Earthquake was *Britain* divided from *France*. And how ſometimes they have heaved up Iſlands in the midſt of the Seas, as it were to compenſate the loſs of thoſe which they had ſwallowed up: Thus were *Delos*, *Rhodus*, *Æxaria*, with ſome others raiſed out of the Boſom of the Ocean, into which by the like cauſe they may again ſubſide. And how they have cauſed *Peſtilential Contagions* from that exhalation, which being long pent up in the Bowels of the Earth contracts poiſonous qualities, which breaking forth, impreſs their Venom, and Malignity upon our Bodies; And how they cauſe *barrenneſs of the Earth*, from the ſame poiſonous exhalations, which as they paſs through the pores of the Earth do not only leave a venemous Tincture in the Earth it ſelf, but deſtroy the ſeminal Particles of the Seeds already lodged in the Ground. Let the Natural Philoſophers

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ſpend their verdict how they pleaſe; all I ſhall ſay is this, that they may *ſignifie more to us then they can effect.*

Pſal. 104. 32. (4.) Let us therefore own the Hand of God in theſe ſhakings: *who looks upon the Earth and it ſhaketh, who toucheth the Hills and they Smoak.* If a *look* of God can ſhake the Earth, what can his *touch* do? and if the *Finger of God* be ſo powerful, what is his *Arm*? *Second Cauſes* of theſe convulſive Motions, muſt be allowed, but not to joſtle out *the Firſt*, to whom the other are ſubordinate, concatinated to, and depend upon: Let the ſubtle *Cardan, and Scaliger* quarrel, and vex themſelves and others, whether *Fire, Water, or Air* be the true cauſes of theſe Commotions; Let others tell us how *theſe Subterraneous Thunders owe their Birth to ſulphureous, and Nitrous Veins fired, upon rarefaction, and forcing their way through reſiſting Bodies.* Let the Heathens call their Idol *Neptune* Ἐνοσίχθων, καὶ Σεισίχθονα, the great *Earth-ſhaker*; we are taught to eye, adore, and fear before the Lord, who hangs the Earth upon nothing, and can thither reduce it.

Pſeudodox. Epidem. *p.* 69

A. Gell. Noct. At. *Lib.* 2.

Pſal. 46. 2. (5.) Laſtly, let us labour to get an Intereſt in this great God, and live by Faith upon him, then ſhall we not need to *fear though the Earth be removed.* *For they that truſt in the Lord ſhall be as mount Sion, which cannot be removed, but ſtandeth faſt for ever.*

Pſa. 125. 1.

Thus far, Sir, at your Importunity I have drawn out this Diſcourſe, for your private entertainment and ſatisfaction: I have already exceeded the bounds of a Letter; And if the Remainder of my Paper will give me leave, I will take leave, when I have ſubſcribed my ſelf,

Jan. 18. 167⅞.

Sir, your humble Servant.
N. N.

FINIS.

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